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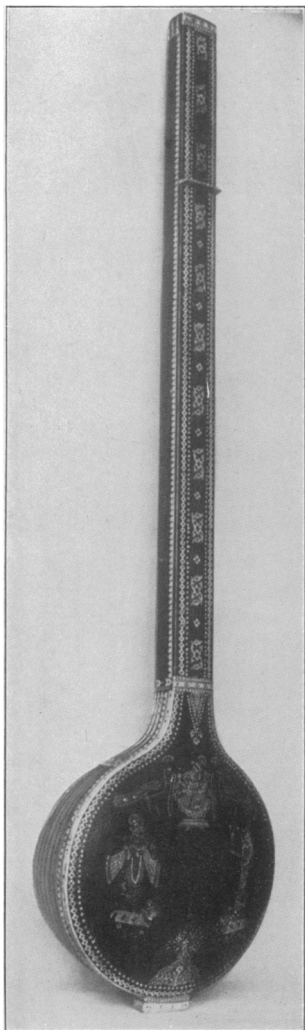
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AN EAST INDIAN LUTE



LUTE
Inlaid and Painted
India

An East Indian lute or sitar, illustrated here, has recently been secured by the Museum. It is covered with brilliantly painted figures of men, birds, animals, and the elephant-headed god Ganesha. Around the edges are inlays of ivory and ebony, extending entirely along the neck. The sounding board is slightly convex, the bulbous body being beautifully fluted on the under side. The long neck is flat on top and rounded beneath. Originally this instrument had frets of catgut and four wire strings, which were tightened by means of long wooden pegs.

The lute can be traced back to ancient times, when it was known as the "nofre," as seen to-day on the bas-reliefs of Egypt. The *el oud* of Arabia and Persia, with neck shortened and bent back and sounding hole beautifully carved, is its descendant.

In the Indian lute the sounding hole is wanting. The *el oud* is plucked with an eagle's quill, while the Indian lute is played with the fingers. The performer sits on the ground and holds the instrument upright, resting the neck on one of his shoulders. The lute and the guitar belong to the same family, but the latter has a flat back, while the former has a rounded body.

India has an infinite variety of lutes, the *vina*, her national instrument, having a long cylindrical body resting on two gourds and resonated with raised frets, and tambours of all kinds with gourd or tortoise-shell bodies.

The Museum collection of musical instruments is now fairly representative, numerous rare examples having been added during the past year. It has been installed in cases along the south side of the large East Gallery. The wind instruments occupy a case at the East end, followed by the collection of bells, gongs, and cymbals. Next come the stringed instruments, which include a valuable series from India, presented by the British Government, and Chinese instruments given by the Chinese Commissioners at the close of the Centennial Exhibition. At the West end are arranged the drums and rattles.

S. S. F.